

Gender

Building Gender Inclusive Open Government

At the core of OGP is the belief that governments should serve citizens, not themselves. To truly serve all citizens, open government reformers must recognise that citizens are not all equally affected by policy choices. Government policies and practices often systematically exclude gender groups like women, girls, non-binary individuals, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community.¹ Placing *all* citizens back at the center of governance demands that policymakers and civil society advocates take an active approach to bringing these communities into policy-making and commitment drafting processes. This means actively consulting these communities and asking specific questions about how policies address their needs and close gaps in services, applying a gender and inclusion lens to all aspects of their work.

Across the Partnership, civil society, governments, and other key actors are doing just that: using OGP action plans to review open government commitments with a gender perspective and include more gender groups in their OGP national and local processes. In addition to gender-informed commitments, open government reformers are joining forces with gender and inclusion advocates across the partnership to better recognize and respond to the lived realities of women, girls, and those across the gender and sexual-identity spectrum.

Trajectory in OGP

Thanks to the increased advocacy around gender in recent years, there were more gender-related commitments made in 2019 than from 2011-2018 combined. Nearly 40 percent of OGP members now have at least one gender commitment, and half of all 2020 action plans included a gender commitment. This represents a significant increase in recent years, with gender growing as a substantial thematic area in action plans in 2020.

How OGP Supports Inclusive Gender Reforms

In OGP action plans, a systematic approach to gender reforms has translated into better gender commitments, improved mainstreaming and gender reviews of action plans--and, importantly, more inclusive participation of gender groups in OGP processes. OGP has seen significant growth at connecting these priorities at the local, national, and global levels.

About OGP and this series

In 2011, government leaders and civil society advocates came together to create a unique partnership—one that combines these powerful forces to promote transparent, participatory, inclusive and accountable governance. As the Open Government Partnership (OGP) completes 10 years, this series of thematic snapshots provide a glimpse how policy areas have advanced, as accelerated by the OGP platform and a growing global community of reformers in governments, civil society, business, media and international organizations.



Action plan co-creation

The OGP platform creates moments when people and organizations can propose concrete commitments. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that participation of gender groups has been steadily increasing in OGP action plan processes.

- **Participation:** During action planning process, representatives from numerous gender organizations participated in OGP co-creation processes around the world. Notable examples included: Sierra Leone, Argentina, Afghanistan, Philippines, and Mexico.
- **Leadership:** Mexico, Sierra Leone, and Argentina all had gender groups as official members of their multi-stakeholder fora. In some countries like Morocco, there has been an explicit effort to recruit women's rights organizations to join leadership bodies.
- **Coordination:** In the [Philippines](#), CARE Philippines served as an on-the-ground resource for women's rights organizations to understand and access entry points to OGP processes through tailored workshops and support.

Diverse OGP participation helps reforms address real needs

More diverse participation in OGP is not just an end in itself. It means that the commitments in an action plan are more diverse and better fit the needs of people. That, in turn, means more impact. Reformers have used their action plans to close specific gaps in policy for women, girls, non-binary individuals, and the LGBTQIA+ community. In several OGP countries, gender advocates have pushed for more ambitious commitments to meet each country's challenges.

- [Germany](#) has multiple OGP commitments focused on implementation of the Act on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leadership Positions in the Private and the Public Sector.
- [Ecuador](#) is reducing gender-based violence through the co-creation of a new gender-based violence national plan.
- In [Sierra Leone](#), parliament is working with women's groups to create more inclusive and open planning processes.

Gender Reviews of Action Plans

The OGP community has also adopted another promising trend: systematic gender reviews of OGP action plans. Governments apply a gender-based analysis to action plans to better understand where reforms may impact different communities negatively and where those communities may need additional support or engagement or where an action plan may need revision. Prior to finalizing their action plan, the Government of Canada conducted a Gender-based Analysis (GBA+) review of all draft commitments to ensure the full plan took into consideration the needs of different gender groups. This directly inspired Argentina to conduct a gender review on their 2019-2022 action plan in partnership with a CSO, Poder Ciudadano ("Citizen Power" in English).

Gender mainstreaming across policy areas

Reformers in a number of countries have also conducted reviews of specific policies that were likely to have disproportionate impacts on different groups:

- **Anonymous companies:** [Italy](#) committed to building gender-disaggregated data into its beneficial ownership register, better detailing women-owned businesses.
- **Extractive industries:** The [Philippines](#) and [Nigeria](#) committed to integrating gender into their Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and natural resource commitments.
- **Participatory budgeting:** In [Côte d'Ivoire](#), women's groups engaged in participatory budgeting to help set priorities and fund public services that better respond to their needs.
- **Equity in the workforce:** [Argentina](#) committed to collect gender-disaggregated employment data to better understand where and how women engage in the workforce.

Connecting international agendas to national and local action

OGP provides a way for advocates to work across borders to bring attention to the need for change, to spotlight bold reform, to share ideas, and to bring resources to activists working at the domestic level. A systematic approach to gender-informed open government started at OGP in 2018 with the Feminist Open Government Initiative, building on ad hoc approaches from governments and civil society partners to bring more diverse voices into open government.

Under the leadership of then OGP co-chair Government of Canada and Nathaniel Heller of Global Integrity, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), OGP's 2019 [Break the Roles](#) campaign, which asked governments and partners to take action to increase gender in co-creation and commitments, drove even greater attention to the issue. These efforts sparked research, reflections, and reforms that are transforming the role of women and LGBTQIA+ members in open government. The campaign focused on gender initially and has grown to better understand how gender exclusion compounds with other discriminations against youth, ethnic and religious minorities, and persons with disabilities. Supported by a global coalition that included the governments of Afghanistan, Argentina, Canada, Italy, Kenya, and South Korea, along with partners like Open Heroines, Equal Measures 2030, CARE International, Open Data Charter, and Hivos, the OGP Support Unit was able to accelerate this conversation across the open government community.

Looking Ahead

The OGP Support Unit and Steering Committee continue to support increased inclusion across its members and network, including the thousands of CSO partners that help drive open government reforms.

Innovations from members, researchers, and various partnerships have identified priority areas where open government action is warranted, including:

- Improving co-creation processes to: (1) include more diverse organizations and ministries to ensure action plans reflect their needs; and (2) carry out analysis to understand the differential needs and impacts of action plans and commitments.
- Designing and implementing stronger commitments that address specific gender gaps in public services, economic reforms, LGBTQIA+ rights, and gender-based violence and online civic space.
- Bringing gender perspectives into foundational OGP policies areas like anti-corruption, fiscal transparency, justice, artificial intelligence, and data-driven algorithms.

Inclusion is achieved over time, not overnight. By connecting gender and inclusion advocates to reformers across 78 member countries, a growing number of local governments and thousands of civil society organizations, OGP has helped move gender from the sidelines to centre stage, bringing new voices into open government. Their presence leaves the open government community better positioned to tackle shrinking civic space, the rollback of democracy, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the current trajectory, OGP will continue to strengthen their participation across all areas of the partnership to help build inclusive, shared solutions to these challenges.

References

¹ Throughout this document, there is reference to women, girls, non-binary individuals, and LGBTQIA+ actors as specific stakeholders engaged and consulted in OGP co-creation and implementation. This will also appear as “gender groups” for shorthand. These categories are not comprehensive, and there are overlapping identities and intersectionalities within and across these groups that greatly impact voice, agency, and access. None of these groups are a monolith, and diverse consultation is needed across identities and experience to better ensure open government approaches serve a diversity of citizens.